



**ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION
MEETING (AMENDED 8/14/24)
AGENDA**

6:00 PM - Wednesday, August 14, 2024

Via Video Conference and In Person

IN-PERSON PARTICIPATION: Members of the public may participate in-person at the Los Altos Community Center in the Sequoia Room located at 97 Hillview Ave., Los Altos, CA.

REMOTE MEETING PARTICIPATION: Members of the public may attend the meeting virtually via the link below, but will not be permitted to provide public comment via Zoom or telephone.

<https://losaltosca-gov.zoom.us/j/81672879521?pwd=qD1zGXbDdkYaXQ7nntFUb1hLNAdroE.1>

Telephone: 1-669-444-9171 / Meeting ID: 816 7287 9521 / Passcode: 479222

PUBLIC COMMENT: Public comments can be made verbally, in-person at the public hearing or submitted in writing prior to the meeting. Written comments can be mailed or delivered in person to the Development Services Department or emailed to ECPublicComment@losaltosca.gov.

Correspondence must be received by 2:00 p.m. on the day of the meeting to ensure distribution prior to the meeting. Comments provided after 2:00 p.m. will be distributed the following day and included with public comment in the Environmental Commission packet.

Public comment cannot be taken via Zoom or telephone.

PLEASE NOTE: Commissioner Teksler will participate in the meeting via videoconference from the site listed below. The meeting agenda will be posted at the videoconference site, which is accessible to the public. Anyone wishing to address the Commission from the videoconference site will be provided with an opportunity to do so.

Location: 2800 Erwin Road, Durham, North Carolina

AGENDA

ESTABLISH QUORUM

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

Members of the audience may bring to the Commission's attention any item that is not on the agenda. The Commission Chair will announce the time speakers will be granted before comments begin. Please be advised that, by law, the Planning Commission is unable to discuss or take action on issues presented during the Public Comment Period. According to State Law (also known as "The Brown Act") items must first be noted on the agenda before any discussion or action.

1. **8-14-24 Public Comments**

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

2. **Special Presentation:** GreenTown's summer interns will present on the benefits of joining Tree City USA.

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION/ACTION

3. **Meeting Minutes:** Approve minutes of the regular meeting of June 12, 2024.
4. **Building Electrification Subcommittee Presentation:** The subcommittee will present its recommendations to the Commission outlining strategies to accelerate building electrification.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

5. **Budget Update:** Report out on sustainability budget allocation.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

6. **2025 EV Fair:** The Commission will continue the discussion on hosting a 2025 electric vehicle fair.

COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS AND COMMENTS

1. Council Meeting Report Out

2. Ad Hoc Committee Reports

- a. Single-Use Plastics
- b. Building Electrification
- c. Dark Skies/Bird Safety

STAFF UPDATES

POTENTIAL FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- 1. SVCE Update (FALL)
- 2. CAL Water Update (FALL)
- 3. General Outreach

ADJOURNMENT

SPECIAL NOTICES TO PUBLIC

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and California Law, it is the policy of the City of Los Altos to offer its programs, services and meetings in a manner that is readily accessible to everyone, including individuals with disabilities. If you are a person with a disability and require information or

materials in an appropriate alternative format; or if you require any other accommodation, please contact department staff. Advance notification within this guideline will enable the City to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility.

Agendas, Staff Reports and some associated documents for the Environmental Commission items may be viewed on the Internet at <http://losaltosca.gov/meetings>.

Public Comment 8/14/24 Environmental Commission

Alice Mansell <alice@mansell.com>

Wed 8/14/2024 1:59 PM

To:Public Comment - EC <ECpubliccomment@losaltosca.gov>

I am a signatory to the NE Grove permit appeal to prevent destruction of 30% of the historic orchard resource.

The reason The Crier had news last week of LALE being forced to pay for a historian was a LALE board member told me that in person right after the Library Commission meeting August 1. That hire is part of a mandatory CEQA process for impacts on a historic resource which was not begun until a tolling agreement forced City staff to insist on it. But, City staff has not yet made clear if that historian's work will be limited in scope to just the next proposed LALE library courtyard footprint or the whole historic Orchard resource. Regardless, any historic review as part of any CEQA process affecting the orchard should at minimum go for public review to both the Historic and Environmental commissions.

To date, as far as I know from City Hall the only CEQA project it has in process (not exempt from public review negative declarations for its projects with ground broken now at the Civic Center) for which it will do a full public environmental review is an Adobe Creek project. (See attachment for City's CEQA negative declaration for the EOC work and its tree statement therein and the dates.) No public CEQA process review so far for the \$5+M work being done now on the LACY conversion (\$4.5M), and EOC generator (approx. \$800K) with also Los Altos Community Center EOC interior upgrades and that project's extensive newly trenched utility lines. Nor any public discussions on City staff's "future" plans to expand the Police Department building and install new utility lines as some of its justifications to bulldoze 30% of the orchard. I urge the Commissioners to study a few pages each from the attached EOC and LACY building plans which I was told by City staff in June 2024 were copyrighted and thus not available for any public review. I obtained them in July by a public records request. Neither project had any public review for the "best use" of the open lands of each project now removing from public access such as land for the new and tall fenced private patio for the new City Managers' office to the tall fenced EOC generator and its fuel tank, nor the removal of two protected 50+" diameter oaks for the generator's new drainage field and part of the Dog Park. Trees removed after the attached CEQA exemption filing.

To date staff has only allowed the PRA&C in June 2024 and Council in July 2024 to discuss the Dog Park's removal of Library parking spaces but not to vote on which staff proposal each body prefers. Staff said at the June PRA&C meeting they prefer parking mitigation to include removing all the Police Department lawn and use some orchard lands by the Library and Police Department to pave over for parking as well as having new "staff reserved" parking spaces next to their new private offices at LACY.

How City staff calculate the size of a project to avoid all public review of their designs needs your input. LACY's "exterior" work does not count it says because staff deems it all to be "flat work" despite new concrete ADA ramps, new tall privacy fences, and a large new tall fenced utility yard. Staff deemed all interior work for the EOC at Los Altos Community Center to be exempt from that project's square footage as well as all its new utility line trenches. They rely on old staff discretionary "expert" powers to interpret laws, how to do math, and even how to define the word "flat."

Staff also told me in June 2024 all commissioners in the City have for LACY or EOC projects no "purview" to review their math or law interpretations, no power even to discuss those plans unless in their commissions'

work plans (which depend a great deal on staff time "availability") or at the express "behest" of Ci
How staff self-permitted and broke ground in May on its LACY remodeling without any prior public
discussion at any commission of that building's "best" public use is astounding.

Now staff wants to remove more than 30% of the orchard and spend over \$6M on the LACY remodeling, new
EOC, and the Dog Park (a \$1M project)with mitigation for its lost Library parking spaces - while also
accepting approximately \$1M from LALE for a new Library courtyard encroaching into the historic orchard.
How all that together does not affect the "environment" of Los Altos and needs no review by the
Environmental Commission is mind boggling.

I ask the Environmental Commission to have a special session to discuss why City staff has not as required by
California law a public review of all the "environmentally sensitive" impacts on our historic orchard resource
given the \$8M of new buildings and plans for our Civic Center. Each of those projects must have public
design review discussions before permits are issued, including a full historic survey and review of that historic
resources, all as part of the mandatory CEQA process.

Alice Mansell
Los Altos, California

- CEQA Exempt Los Altos for Emergency Ops Center ...
- Commission Hillview Dog Park PPT 24.06.18 reduce...
- EOC 50"+ trees Screenshot 2024-08-02 at 9.10.47 P...
- EOC Approved Plan Set (1).pdf
- LAYC Approved Plan set.pdf

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF LOS ALTOS, HELD ON WEDNESDAY, JUNE 12, 2024, AT 6:00 P.M. IN PERSON AND TELECONFERENCE

ESTABLISHING QUORUM

PRESENT: Chair Hecht, Vice Chair Humayun, Commissioner Delagneau, Commissioner van Reis, and Commissioner Teksler (arrived at 6:22pm)

ABSENT: Commissioner Weiden

ATTENDEES: Tania Katbi (Sustainability Management Analyst)
Xiomara Aguirre (Development Services Technician)
Nick Zornes (Director of Development Services)

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

Gary Hedden, GreenTown Los Altos, provided public comment.

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION/ACTION

1. Environmental Commission Minutes

Approved minutes of the May 8, 2024, meeting.

Action: Upon a motion by Chair Hecht, seconded by Commissioner Delagneau, the Environmental Commission approved the meeting minutes.

The motion was approved (6-0) by the following vote:

AYES: Delagneau, Hecht, Humayun, Teksler, van Reis, Lu

NOES: None

ABSENT: Weiden

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

2. Presentation from Mission Trail Waste Systems (MTWS)

MTWS staff gave an update on the state of plastic recycling, potential for Los Altos to expand recycling efforts, and SB 54.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

3. EV Fair

City Staff and the Commission discussed hosting a 2025 EV Fair or general Sustainability event and outreach at the 2025 Los Altos Farmers Market. The Commission will bring back this item for continued discussion in August.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

AD HOC COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Dark Skies/Bird Safe Ordinance

Chair Hecht and Commissioner Lu provided updates.

b. Single-Use Plastics

Staff and Commissioners provided information and updates.

c. Building Electrification

The Subcommittee (Vice Chair Humayun, Commissioner Delagneau and Commissioner Teksler) reported on their recommendations for accelerating building electrification.

COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS AND COMMENTS

Commissioners provided updates from the May City Council meetings.

STAFF UPDATES

No updates.

POTENTIAL FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

1. SVCE Update (FALL)
2. CAL Water Update (FALL)
3. Budget update/debrief (AUG)
4. GreenTown Summer Internship (AUG)
5. General Outreach

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Hecht adjourned the meeting at 8:45 pm.

Accelerating Building electrification part 2

Building electrification Sub-committee:
B. Delagneau, R. Humayun, L. Teksler



Table of Content

- Update (see backup slides)
- Strategy
- Recommendations
- Other considerations
- Discussion



Strategy

- Partner with an outside organization to accelerate electrification
- Increase outreach and education
- Incentivize electrification with building exceptions
- Disincentivize gas appliances
- Reach codes options



Recommendation 1

- Partner with outside third party to accelerate electrification of single home residences
 - Target start Q1 2025
 - Program should go until at least 2027, extendable to 2029
 - In line with BAAQMD phase out plan
 - Three to four potential partners
 - BlocPower, Onsemble, QuitCarbon and Zero Homes (not evaluated)
 - Request format to be discussed (RFP, RFQ or open call)
 - RFP or RFQ preferred



Recommendation 1

- Potential third-party partners:

Blocpower	Onsemble	QuitCarbon
HQ in NY but presence in Bay Area (-)	Local (++)	Local
Larger organization (++)	New company (--)	Reasonably experienced (+)
Most experience (++)	Process improving	Live person in process (+)
Highest cost to city (--)	Cost to city = only marketing costs (+)	Cost to city = only marketing costs (+)
Owner has to manage incentives (--)	Manages incentives upfront (++++)	Owner has to manage incentives (--)
Experience mostly in multi-housing (-)	Currently only does HPWH installs (-)	Can fully electrify home (+)
Los Altos may not be a priority (-)	Nimble and eager (+)	Flexibility (+)
	Need to install app, upload photos (-)	Large range of estimate (?)



Recommendation 2

- Develop a comprehensive citywide educational/outreach Plan
 - Action 1: Update/improve and maintain sustainability page
 - Easier access, links on city home page
 - links to partner organizations (SVCE, BayRen, BA communities, Acterra etc)
 - Action 2: Continue EV fair and add more building electrification booths
 - Action 3: Have link to sustainability page on planning permit application
 - Action 4: Develop training platform for city groups such as BAT and Resilient Los Altos
 - Action 5: Create a series of lectures/town halls on the benefits of electrification
 - Four per year over two years (to be extended as needed)
 - HVAC heatpumps, HPWH, Solar and batteries, Induction cooktops
 - Action 6: Add building electrification booth at farmers' market
 - Action 7: Advertising/articles in Town Crier (can be in conjunction with 2 and 5)



Recommendation 3

- Add building incentives for all electric new homes or remodels/additions
 - Can be done at the planning stage
 - Example of incentives:
 - Increase lot coverage (5%)
 - Increase FAR
 - Priority review timeline
- Have incentives for new HVACHP, solar inverters and battery equipment
 - Lower setbacks to 4 feet (in line with SB9 and ADU guidelines)
 - Consider lowering further (3 feet) for equipment with an average noise level below 60db



Recommendation 4

- Gas appliances are an environmental and health hazard
 - Emission of nitrogen oxide, carbon monoxide and formaldehyde in homes
 - Increased risks of asthma in children, acute respiratory episodes in seniors with COPD, and chronic pulmonary insufficiency
 - Emission of CO2 and methane outside
 - Contributes to climate change
 - Emission of harmful pollutants has a societal cost
 - Individuals installing new gas appliances should contribute to the city's effort to make the town cleaner, healthier and safer for all
- We propose that the city charges an environmental fee for each new gas appliance
 - Up to an equivalent of 10% of the install cost
 - Proceeds to go into an environmental fund to finance CAAP actions



Other considerations

- Reach Codes:
 - 2023 reach codes not enforced due to 9th district court ruling
 - BAAQMD still planning to enforce regulations 9-4 (gas fired furnaces) and 9-6 (gas fired boilers and water heaters)
 - Emissions rule (NOx)
 - Would ban GWH after 2027
 - Would ban gas furnaces after 2029, Large gas furnaces banned after 2031
 - Preference for using emissions-based ordinance similar to Los Altos Hills (NOx) or New York City (GHG) ordinance
 - One-margin or flex-path options not optimal
 - Still mix energy buildings with no option for 0 emission homes
- Recommendation is to wait for new California building codes in 2025 before making a decision



Discussion



Backup



Update on Partnering

- Sub-committee evaluated another potential third-party organization: QuitCarbon
 - Based in San Francisco, has been in operations for several years and has completed 100's of projects
 - Has partnerships with Los Altos Hills, San Jose, San Francisco, Santa Monica (partnership type varies)
 - Website collects basic information, followed by Zoom call to get home evaluation
 - Discounts and rebates taken into account but application by homeowner
 - If homeowner agrees on scope of work, assigns a contractor to bid



Update on Partnering

- Talked to Nik Kaester from the San Francisco Environment department
- Have an Open Call for third party to help electrify low-income housing at \$0 cost to renter or homeowner
- Currently have two providers, 8 installs done, 12 coming. Target 50 installs by end of 2024
- Marketing and management of program by San Francisco
- Staff can also go on site to manage potential issues
- Funding was from TechClean until now. City provides bridge funding until Federal incentives kick in



Update on Partnering

- Talked to Steve Smith from Los Altos Hills
- Had an electrification program going with QuitCarbon and Zero Homes
- Only 12 homes done
 - Lack of traction
 - City was doing outreach and marketing
 - Staff member left
- Positive feedback on QuitCarbon



Onsemble

- New organization (started in January)
- App focused to start the process but follow up through phone calls
 - Need to upload photos, videos
- Incentives/rebates are discounted upfront
 - Customer only pays net cost
- Program can be customized based on income (city or other incentives)
- Expect to install up to 1,000 new HPWH by year end
- Can take a couple weeks to get a final proposal



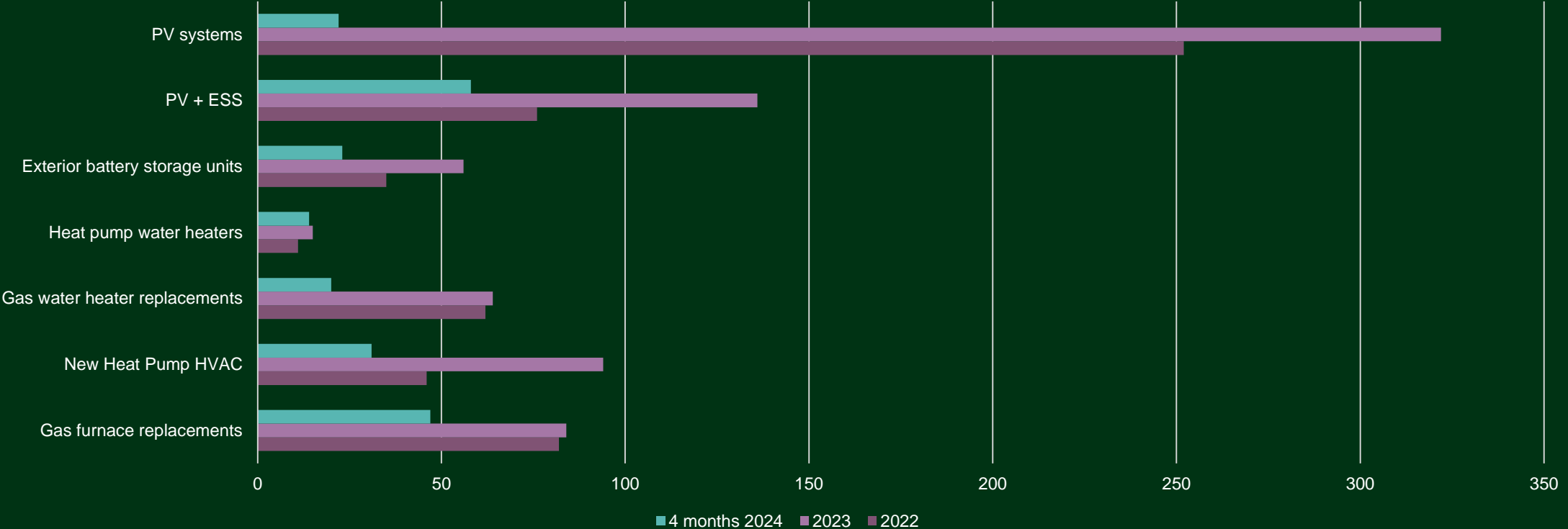
BlocPower

- Larger organization with significant staff support
 - Multiple city partnerships inside and outside Bay Area already
- Requires city investment (yearly fee for program management including marketing/outreach, customized website)
- Program can be tailored from just outreach to concierge service
- Los Altos proposal:
 - Marketing campaign to drive residents to platform
 - Dedicated Los Altos platform which gives a report on suggested scope of work
 - Includes discounts and rebates
 - Access to BlocPower contractors
 - Potential access to Bloc Power construction team



2022-2024 Permit Data

Permits Los Altos



2022-2024 Permit Data

	2022	2023	4 months 2024
Gas furnace replacements	82	84	47
New Heat Pump HVAC	46	94	31
Gas water heater replacements	62	64	20
Heat pump water heaters	11	15	14
Exterior battery storage units	35	56	23
PV + ESS	76	136	58
PV systems	252	322	22



Comment to the Building Electrification Subcommittee Presentation

Angelo De Giuli <angelo.g.degiuli@gmail.com>

Tue 8/13/2024 9:11 PM

To:Public Comment - EC <ECpubliccomment@losaltosca.gov>

Cc:City Council <council@losaltosca.gov>

From: Angelo De Giuli -- 1816 Granger Avenue, Los Altos

To: City of Los Altos ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

Cc: CITY COUNCIL

Comment to the Building Electrification Subcommittee Presentation

I have been a resident of Los Altos since 1999, and I deeply appreciate our town, with its proximity to the hills and temperate weather. However, I am increasingly alarmed by the trend of drier winters and hotter summers. Science clearly shows that this trend is driven by human activity, and if left unchecked, it will have dramatic impacts on our environment and quality of life here in Los Altos, as well as even more devastating effects in other parts of the world. Ultimately, this could threaten the survival of humanity.

CO2 and natural gas emissions from human activities are major drivers of these life-threatening changes, and in California, the building sector is a significant contributor to these emissions. For this reason, I strongly support the commission's focus on accelerating building electrification.

I have carefully reviewed the presentation. Unfortunately, I cannot attend the meeting in person, so I am sending this letter to express my full agreement with the strategy and my wholehearted support for the recommendations. I hope this is just the first step and that in the future, the City of Los Altos will take even bolder actions to address the climate crisis and set a national example of what can and should be done. Los Altos is a wealthy and educated community; if we cannot lead the way, who can?

Sincerely,

Angelo De Giuli

comments from Bob Mayo

Robert Mayo <bob.mayo@gmail.com>

Tue 8/13/2024 12:48 PM

To:Public Comment - EC <ECpubliccomment@losaltosca.gov>;Gabriel Engeland <gengeland@losaltosca.gov>;City Council <council@losaltosca.gov>

Cc:Connie Miller <cmiller1119@gmail.com>

Dear Environmental Commission,

I have reviewed the meeting slides for this Wednesday's meeting of the Environmental Commission, including the **strategy for accelerating building electrification** in Los Altos. **I commend you** for producing a thoughtful strategy. Each of these actions support the other ones, so **I encourage you to adopt all of them, as a whole.**

Anecdotally, my experiences with both Quit Carbon and, to a small extent, Onsemble have been positive, making them strong choices in my view. Is it possible to choose more than one? Allowing two organizations to compete could be beneficial, offering Los Altans both an experienced home electrifier like Quit Carbon and an innovative, app-based water heater concierge like Onsemble. Also, rebates are a hassle for consumers, so vendors that can provide help with them should be preferred.

To supplement the actions shown in your presentation slides, Connie Miller, of GreenTown Los Altos, and I have developed a list of other actions the city could take if they wish. These are mostly drawn from other sources, shown in the references section at the end of this message, but they also include some ideas of our own. I hope you can review the list and consider these additional actions for Los Altos.

--Bob

Bob Mayo

Building Electrification Options for Los Altos

Ordinances & Policies

City ordinances can accelerate heat pump water heater adoption as well as other types of building electrification.

1. A Prewiring Ordinance. This requires electrical wiring to be added for future electric appliances when a house is remodeled. It does not prohibit the use of gas appliances. The city would need to decide on when the code is triggered; for example, if 30% or 50% of the house is remodeled, or if the room that contains a gas appliance is remodeled. Such an ordinance can stop short of requiring an electrical panel upgrade, for example by having the wires terminate in a stub in the panel. There are many options. For heat pump water heaters, allocate sufficient space for the larger space needed and as possible. Resources for cities: Tony Eulo at SVCE, prewiring ordinances at other cities, and also see the existing buildings section at bayareareachcodes.org
2. Require air conditioning (AC) to heat pump conversions at time of AC unit replacement. This type of ordinance usually lets the furnace stay, so the ordinance requires very little of the homeowner other than an additional cost of \$1,000 to 2,000. In exchange, they get both cooling and heat, and the furnace can be set to kick on at very low temperatures if they wish. Contact SVCE for possible model ordinance or discussion.
3. Require the architect and homeowner to sign a disclosure when pulling a permit, that warns them of the hazards of natural gas pipes and appliances and that they are being phased out at the State level, and that assets installed today may be obsolete in the future.
4. Implement all building electrification measures listed in SVCE's "Permit Modernization and Building Decarbonization Policy Presentation". <https://tinyurl.com/ccl-svce-permit>

Leadership

Cities can declare their positions and practice what they preach.

5. Demonstrate leadership by joining Rewiring America's Local Government Leaders for Electrification and taking their pledge. <https://www.rewiringamerica.org/local-gov-leaders-for-electrification>
6. Strengthen the Climate Action Plan by adding building electrification goals and funding programs to meet those goals.
7. Support SVCE's efforts, including by having the city's board representative vote in favor of building electrification programs.
8. Convert municipal buildings to be electric. Show preparation for the BAAQMD ruling by replacing all smaller city-owned gas water heaters, those under 75,000 BTU or 80 gallons, with heat pump water heaters. Maximize exposure with signage and possibly tours or events.
9. Work with other cities to introduce a state bill allowing individual cities to tax natural gas at a different rate than electricity. CCL folks will suggest the two fuels should each be taxed according to their carbon intensity.

Permitting

Eliminate barriers to adoption to encourage behavior without mandates.

10. Modernize and streamline permitting. Allow instant online permitting of heat pump water heater plan review, and with automatic approval. There's SVCE money for modernizing permitting, and they have a list of specific actions a city can take. Optimize permitting even for the most difficult case: emergency replacement of a gas water heater with a heat pump water heater, using a gas loaner for 6 weeks while electrical and other work is done.
11. Reduce or eliminate permitting fees for heat pump water heaters. (see Half Moon Bay) This is not necessarily lost revenue, as most current gas water heater replacements do not pull a permit.
12. Ensure that building inspectors aren't unintentionally adding additional requirements on top of the manufacturer's specifications. Make sure building inspectors understand the new 120V shared-circuit models, as well understand that there is a wide variation of space requirements for models, including some designed to require little space.
13. Record in the permit system the type of water heater installed (gas, propane, resistance, heat pump).
14. Provide a method of inspection more streamlined than a typical inspection.
15. Hand out a gas disclosure booklet with all permits.

Outreach

Creating awareness and educating homeowners is a key to increasing building electrification.

16. Change the name of the EV Fair to Electrification Fair, expanding its scope.
17. Use posters, mailers, point-of-sale displays, newsletters, and the city website to promote heat pump water heaters.
18. Help contractors advertise. Create a venue. Ex: Electrification Fair, pilot co-marketing with top vendors who serve Los Altos.
19. Sponsor a block-level outreach trial, as a setup for upcoming neighborhood decarbonization programs. Goal would be to fine-tune programs to get as many residents as possible, in that particular block, to adopt electric appliances. Track some sort of metric and learn over time.

Water Heater Programs

20. Support community-based non-profits with marketing dollars for heat pump water heater campaigns.
21. Support community-based non-profits by endorsing their efforts. City endorsement builds trust, making community-based heat pump water heater campaigns more successful.
22. Offer city rebates for heat pump water heaters.
23. Sponsor showrooms for showing off heat pump water heaters, including the ability to listen to them to assess sound levels. Might be part of a city building. Can be done in conjunction with GTLA.

References

- SVCE Permit Modernization and Building Decarbonization Policy Presentation: <https://tinyurl.com/svce-permit>
- Code Red: Preparing Cities and Counties for BAAQMD Zero Emissions Rules: <https://acterra.org/advocacy/code-red/>
- SPUR: A toolbox for transitioning to zero-pollution heating equipment: <https://www.spur.org/publications/policy-brief/2024-05-01/fossil-free-heat>